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THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY

The Avicultural Society was founded in 1894 for the study of British and foreign birds in the wild and in captivity. The Society is international in character, having members throughout the world.

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Cover Picture: Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* overwintering in Sakumono Lagoon, Ghana in December by Joe Blossom.

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The Avicultural Society

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I am writing this two days after the National Exhibition at Stafford. The Society's stand was busy with members calling by to say hello and renew subscriptions, and we also welcomed four new members. Thanks to Graham Thurlow, Bill Jesson and Ray Piper who helped to man the stand, ensuring that we all had some time to look at birds, buy supplies and catch up with bird-keeping friends.

The trip to Germany was also a great success, thanks not only to our hosts at the collections we visited, but also to Chris Green who organised the weekend, and to Rainer Berenz who kindly set up several of the visits and joined us for most of them. We were generously received and saw some interesting birds and excellent facilities at all the zoos, bird-parks and private collections visited, and it was a pleasure as always to spend four days in the company of a diverse group of enthusiasts enjoying a shared interest.

I am very pleased to announce that we have made great progress in making the wealth of information in the Avicultural Magazine more widely available. The Biodiversity Heritage Library (a consortium of major US libraries) already has the magazines from 1894-1922 freely available to read online or download (link under "Index 1894-2003" on the "Article Archive" button at www.avisoc.co.uk). We have now agreed that BHL will put the rest of the Avicultural Magazine online, with a rolling five-year embargo on the most recent issues, which will continue to be available exclusively to members and subscribers. BHL are working urgently on this, and we will let you know when further volumes are uploaded. Printed back numbers will continue to be available from the Society.

By the time you read this, I will have enjoyed next weekend's Autumn Social Meeting at Blackpool Zoo and WWT Martin Mere and will be looking forward to the 2018 AGM at Cotswold Wildlife Park on Saturday March 24th. I hope to see you there.

As described in the last issue, the Yellow-throated Greenbul *Atimastillas flavicollis* was bred by Waddesdon Manor Aviary. This is believed to be the first successful breeding of this species in the British Isles. Anyone who knows of a previous breeding is asked to inform the Secretary.

Nigel Hewston

BREEDING THE SENEGAL WHITE-EYE *Zosterops senegalensis*

by Grant Rishman

For two years I tried to breed a pair of Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea* that consisted of a two year old female and a twelve year old male. In September of 2015 the male passed away. As they are listed on CITES I really felt I should make an effort to find a replacement mate and in November I was lucky enough to find a local breeder who would sell me a male.

I introduced the birds and they reacted well, following each other around the aviary and sleeping side-by-side. They were housed in an indoor flight 8 feet long, 6 feet wide and 7 feet high, which they shared with two male Senegal White-eyes *Zosterops senegalensis.* The two species essentially ignored each other.

So I started this year determined to write an article about breeding the Red-billed Leiothrix. As the breeding season progressed, I realised things were not going according to plan, so maybe I should be writing an article on how not to breed the Red-billed Leiothrix! As it turned out I ended up writing a totally different article.

The adult birds are fed a diet of mixed fruits - usually apple, pear, cantaloupe, papaya, grapes and other soft berries and fruits as they come into season. I dice the fruit into quarter inch cubes and feed it mixed with a pound cake, which I will provide the recipe for at the end of this article. They are also given Pretty Bird Softbill pellets and Claus dried insects in separate dishes. I use Hagen Prime for vitamins but no nectar is provided for the White-eyes. Food is offered on two feeding platforms to minimise competition for it. A dish of crushed baked eggshells is provided as a source of calcium but it usually remains untouched by all the softbills until a few days before egg-laying occurs.

On the Easter weekend I furnished the flight with fir and cedar boughs and hung wicker nest cups in eight different locations. Within a week I saw the Red-billed Leiothrix mating but they had yet to build a nest. I increased the amount of live food and was feeding around 30 mealworms, 10 waxworms and 20 defrosted two-week old crickets every morning.

The Red-billed Leiothrix built a nest approximately two inches in diameter in one of the wicker cups, about 3 feet from the ground. Coconut fibre was the only material used.

On April 22nd the first egg appeared and by April 24th the pair was incubating three eggs. On May 1st they stopped incubating and a check of the eggs showed they were infertile. About a month later the female Leiothrix laid one egg from the perch which I found broken on the aviary floor. I checked all the nest sites but there was no activity in any of them. A week later there was a broken white egg on one of the feeding trays. It was at that time I realised at least one of the 'male' White-eyes was a female. I had owned these two birds for 3 years and although there was a minor colour difference I had not seen any interaction between them that would make me think they were a pair.

On July 1st I checked all the nest sites again and there were three eggs in the old Red-billed Leiothrix nest. As the eggs were the size of large peas and white in colour I knew they belonged to the White-eyes. A few years ago I had some Montane White-eyes *Z. poliogastrus* that laid three or four clutches of eggs but they were all infertile, so my expectations were not very high that this would be any different. As I was feeding the birds on July 8th the incubating White-eye flew off the nest and attacked the female Red-billed Leiothrix. I have kept hundreds of White-eyes over my 50 years in aviculture and I have never witnessed such aggression from them. I checked the nest and one of the eggs had hatched. Four days later I checked again and a second egg had hatched, the older chick was already three times as big as its sibling. The third egg was infertile.

I searched the internet to find information on the captive breeding of Senegal White-eyes. I found a few articles on breeding the Oriental White-eye *Z. palpebrosus*, and an excellent article on breeding the Japanese White-eye *Z. japonicus*, written by Bill McDowell from the Audubon Zoo, but I could find nothing on breeding the Senegal White-eye. In the absence of anything specific, his article became my bible. Bill mentioned that insects were fed exclusively for the first two days and by the sixth day fruit was observed to be the main diet fed to the chicks.

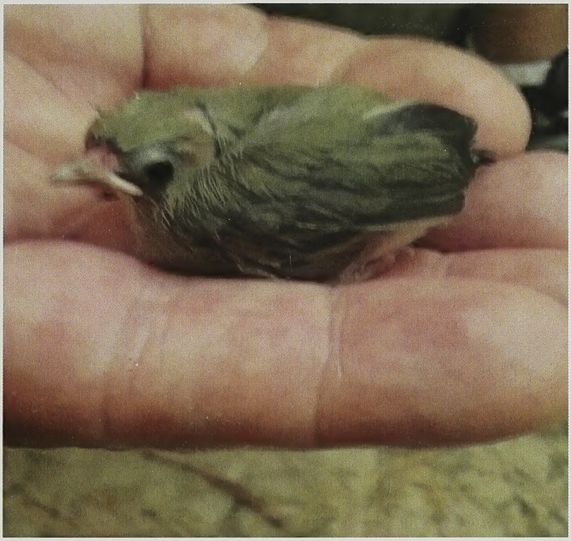
I removed the Red-billed Leiothrix to a different flight as I didn't want them consuming most of the live food or distracting the White-eyes from caring for their chicks.

The birds are usually fed once a day, early every morning; as luck would have it I had booked a week's vacation so I decided to start feeding insects three times a day to ensure they had enough live food. Each feeding would include:

> 10-25 waxworms (depending on whether it was the morning, lunchtime or evening feeding)
> +/- 50 small mealworms (about half an inch long)
> +/- 20 crickets (defrosted, size: two weeks old)
> Fruit flies (three cultures)

Each time I entered the bird room to provide insects I would see the adult that was brooding the chicks, come off the nest. I used that as a sign that chicks were still alive. On July 14th I checked the nest again and the smaller chick was missing. It had obviously perished and had been removed by the parents. The surviving chick, now six days of age, had its eyes partially open and dark feathers clearly visible on its wings.

The chick was close-banded with a C band in the evening of day nine. I banded in the evening because the adults are less active and I hoped they would be less likely to reject the chick.

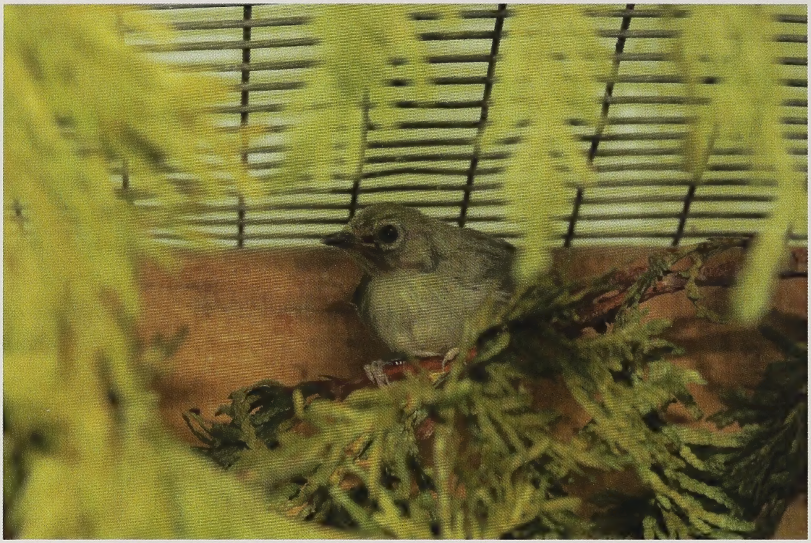


Senegal White-eye chick. 11 days old. So tiny!

On the morning after banding the chick, there were waxworms left uneaten from the previous night. The first thought that went through my mind was that I should not have banded the chick and maybe the parents had rejected it, but I checked the nest and the chick was still alive and healthy.

In contrast to Bill McDowell's article, my birds fed nothing but insects for the first nine days. Waxworms were the preferred food, followed by the defrosted crickets and the fruit flies. The mealworms were the least popular and it didn't matter whether the worms were a quarter of an inch or an inch long, many remained unfed. Any insects that were uneaten by the next feeding were removed and given to other birds.

The chick fledged on July 21st at 13 days old. Its wings were not fully feathered and it was a weak flier that basically ran around on the floor for the first five days. Each day it was noticeable that the wing feathers were fuller than the day before and the bird was growing in confidence. I would catch the chick and place it up in the foliage daily and each day it would try to fly and do a rather ungraceful flop back down to the ground. At 18 days of age its wings had grown full enough to support its weight and it could be seen hopping around in the branches. The next morning at feeding time the chick appeared and gave a little warbled whistle as a greeting. The parents scolded it for drawing the 'predator's' attention to itself and it quickly turned around and flew back to its hiding spot.



Senegal White-eye chick 3 weeks old.

At three weeks of age the chick was flying well and the white eye-ring was starting to feather in. I cut the live food back and was feeding in the mornings and a dozen or so waxworms in the evenings. It was obvious by the consumption of the fruit and pound cake that it had become the food of choice.

The female White-eye was moulting heavily at this time and the pair did not go back to nest.

I was always looking for different sources of live food and my local store was able to supply phoenix Worms, the maggot of the black soldier fly, which have 24 times the calcium content of crickets and 70 times that of mealworms. The White-eyes took a few but the Leiothrix relished them.

Beware of Butter-worms. I had read an internet article about a baby gecko being burned by Butter-worms but other articles said how useful they were so I purchased 50 to see if the birds would eat them. I tried them with the Red-billed Leiothrix and noticed that they would kill them but not consume them. I mentioned this to the supplier and talked about the baby gecko article.

They said they weren't surprised as they had left a couple of dead worms on a plastic sheet and it melted the plastic. So I would not recommend these worms be used as bird food.

Pound cake recipe:

6 oz butter or margarine
8 large eggs
2 cups (1lb) brown sugar
2 cups (1lb) self-raising cake flour
½ cup (4oz) of 90% soya protein powder (from a health food store)
2 medium carrots (blended/grated)

This mix fills about 3 x 8 inch baking pans. It is baked for 50 minutes or until done. Once it has cooled I sprinkle it generously with bee pollen and Prime vitamins and blend it up into a coarse mix. It freezes very well and I usually thaw enough to use for two or three days at a time and keep it in the fridge.

Unfortunately the Leiothrix did not breed this year but the pair are devoted to each other and I look forward to them having another opportunity next year.

A SUCCESSFUL BREEDING IN SOUTH AFRICA OF THE RED-CRESTED CARDINAL *Paroaria coronata*

by F.C. Barnicoat

Ronald Horst is a prominent member of our Rand Avicultural Society. Some ten years ago he was inspired by the pictures in many of the bird books to try to breed such impressive looking birds as Red-crested Cardinals *Paroaria coronata* in his own garden aviaries in Alberton, just south of Johannesburg. His continual endeavours proved informative and worthwhile.

Acquiring stock of this species is no longer easy or inexpensive, as for many years now they have seldom been imported into South Africa. The first pair he was able to purchase proved in 2009 to be two females. Through advertising he was able to get hold of a male, enabling him to set up his first true pair in 2010 in an aviary 1x3.6x2.6m. It was appropriately planted and the Cardinals seemed happy in it. When the first summer rains began they eagerly built a well constructed cup-shaped nest out of coir in the wire cylinder (1m diameter) of salt bush that had been provided. The three eggs laid looked very promising, but disappointment was in store. After several hope-filled days, the eggs were found broken, presumably by the parents, as they were the sole occupants of the aviary.

A very prominent Australian aviculturist, whilst on a tour of South Africa, advised a much bigger aviary for complete success with Cardinals. So for 2011, Ronald transferred the pair to his largest garden type aviary: 10x6x3.6m. The Red-crested Cardinals now shared this tastefully planted and highly attractive aviary with a mixed collection of waxbill, finch and dove species and Chinese Painted Quail *Synoicus chinensis* occupying the floor space, any over-crowding being strictly curtailed. One day as spring advanced, Ronald was dismayed to catch sight of the pair of Red-crested Cardinal breaking and devouring the contents of one of the Chinese Painted Quail eggs that this species tends to lay scattered on the aviary floor. As these quail eggs are somewhat similar to those laid by the Red-crested Cardinal, Ronald at first thought that the pair must be repeating their behaviour of the previous year; but further observation revealed that the Cardinals were busy constructing their neat, cup-shaped nest of coconut fibre in one of the wire rolls of bracken on offer in this large aviary.

In due course two eggs were laid and one hatched after exactly 12 days of incubation. The aviary was supplied with termites regularly for all its waxbill inhabitants, but in addition the Cardinals were given 20 mealworms (young, recently ecdysed ones for preference) at two hourly intervals throughout the day. The single nestling fledged on its 14th day. This precocious development of Red-crested Cardinal chicks to fledge within 14 days has invariably proved the case with all the subsequent youngsters Ronald has raised to maturity. Such precocity is quite usual with soft-billed birds and is perhaps indicative of the highly insectivorous nature of the diet required by Cardinals at the time of raising offspring.

Nothing works like success. By 2012 another three Red-crested Cardinals (a male and two females) for sale in East London had been sourced. Now two unrelated adult pairs could be set up for breeding – the original pair in the very large aviary this year raised two babies and then re-cycled and reared another one (in the same coir nest); and the East London pair in a much smaller, well-planted aviary to themselves raised two chicks only after Chinese Painted Quails had been introduced to occupy the floor space and had laid eggs, some of which the cardinals were seen to eat. Thus the breeding season ended with five youngsters as well as the one raised the previous year. They all matured very nicely, their brown heads colouring-up into bright red just before the next year's breeding season (i.e. during July and August).

For 2013 a third unrelated pair became available for purchase. The owner had been keeping them in a double breeding cage, so they were steadier than the other Cardinals, which are usually very active birds, not easily tamed. This pair was immediately much at home in a planted aviary of 1.2x3.3x1.8m, with only Chinese Painted Quails as companions on the ground. They proved excellent parents and raised two offspring. The original pair reared three babies this year, and the East London pair a single baby, so 2013 saw a record number of six Red-crested Cardinals bred.

During the winter of 2014 the original female died and was replaced by one of her daughters. She raised two lovely babies in the spring, when she was just on a year old, proving that this long-lived taxon can breed when a year old. The other two pairs also raised offspring, making the total bred for the year very satisfying.

2016 was the least successful year when, experimentally, no termites were fed at all. Only three babies were reared for the year, indicating that mealworms alone are insufficient for breeding Red-crested Cardinals.

In short, Ronald Horst advises feeding Red-crested Cardinals an austerity diet through the winter, that is seeds only and half an apple pushed through the wire for each pair weekly. The first spring rains seem to trigger a breeding response. Red-crested Cardinals are remarkably fond of water and adore rain falling on them, for which reason all aviaries housing them have open flight sections. The attempt is made to further stimulate them to breed in the spring by supplementing the winter austerity diet with a daily supply of a sprouted seed and soft food rearing mix. They have seldom bred without the presence of Chinese Painted Quails in their aviary. The eating of their eggs seems often to have triggered breeding.

Usually each pair constructs only one beautifully built cup-shaped nest at the beginning of their breeding season (September to March here in South Africa). They may use this nest for two or three rounds: their hygiene keeps the nest immaculate. For the next year's breeding season they will usually build a new nest. They have usually laid three eggs, sometimes only two. Only twice have three babies hatched, only two of which have ever survived to fledge. On both occasions the third baby died on its fifth day. In general, the success rate of rearing babies to maturity has been low: 30% or less. However, the constant success in raising at least a few Red-crested Cardinals annually for seven years now has been very interesting.

The Rand Avicultural Society honoured Ronald Horst for his consistent successes with the breeding of this challenging species with the award of "Breeder of the Year for 2014".

Fred Barnicoat is a Vice President of the Avicultural Society and has been a frequent contributor to the Magazine over many years.

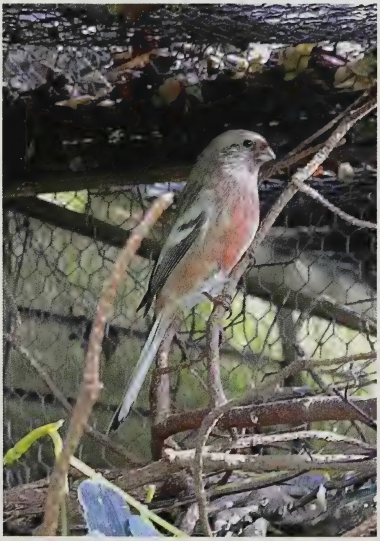
THE LONG-TAILED ROSEFINCH
Carpodacus (Uragus) sibiricus

by Eric Callaghan, Dublin.

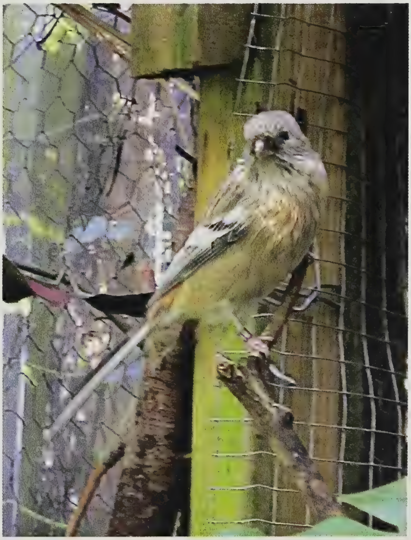
Introduction

The Long-tailed Rosefinch is described as having "...a tiny Bullfinch-like bill. The males are deep pink on the face, rump and underparts, with a white, frosted appearance on the crown and nape. There is a variable amount of white on the wings, depending on subspecies, with the nominate subspecies displaying large patches of white. The tail is black, with white outer feathers. The females are pale grey to sandy brown, with faint streaking and an orange-brown rump. Juveniles are very similar to adult females but are greyer. The bird measures 16-18cm in length, of which the tail comprises 7.5-8.5 cm (male) and 6.7-8.4 cm (female)." (Clement *et al.* 1993).

The nominotypical subspecies was described from specimens found "near montane rivers and streams of southern Siberia. The flight is weak and fluttering and the wingbeats produce a noticeable 'frrrp frrrp' sound. In appearance, actions and behaviour there are many similarities with the Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*. When feeding on grass seeds it clings to the seedheads in a manner similar to that of Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis*." (Dementiev & Gladkov, 1954).



Male



Female

Taxonomy

Originally described as *Loxia sibirica* (Pallas, 1773), it was later separated into the monospecific genus *Uragus* (Keyserling & J.H. Blasius, 1840). In a paper on the phylogenetic relationships of finches published in 2012, the authors proposed that *Uragus* should be merged into the genus *Carpodacus* (Zuccon *et al*, 2012) and it is entered as such in the Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World (del Hoyo and Collar, 2016).

Five subspecies are currently recognised but "assessment of taxonomic status is hampered by the scarcity, distribution and condition of museum material" (del Hoyo and Collar, op. cit.).

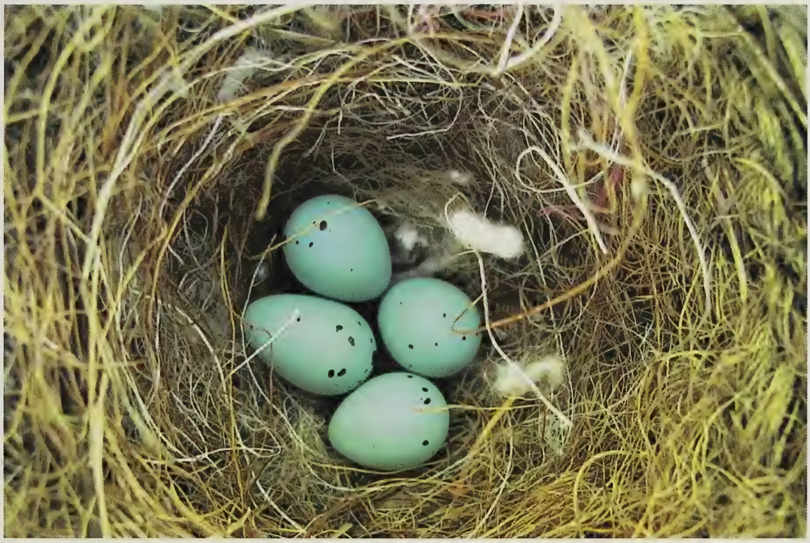
I have been able to locate only one previous reference to the species in The Avicultural Magazine where it is noted in the 'News and Views' section that a pair had bred successfully in an aviary in South Africa (Anon. 1996).

Personal Experiences

I first kept a pair of Long-tailed Rosefinches in the 1990s but this pair (definitely wild-caught in origin) never attempted to nest with me. In retrospect they were kept as part of a mixed aviary, which would not have been conducive to breeding. I did not come across the species again until a friend of mine purchased a pair in the spring of 2013. One young bird was reared from the pair that year, which I obtained in the autumn (designated female no. 1) together with another current-year-bred juvenile (later designated female no. 2), in the hope of making up a pair. The birds were over-wintered separately in triple breeder cages in an unheated shed as I was uncertain about how they would cope with the damp winter weather. Obviously cold alone would not have been a problem for the species.

The 2014 Season

In April the two birds were released into an aviary measuring approximately 330x173x178cm although by then it was clear that both were females. They were the sole occupants of the aviary which was furnished with some bunches of heather tied below the roof (covered with Perspex sheeting) and a pot of artificial bamboo that almost reached the roof. Four open wicker nest baskets were placed around the aviary about 20cm below the roof, with only minimal screening around them. The birds settled well and by the 6th May both were carrying nesting material, consisting of dry grass, sisal and some coconut fibre. By the 15th May the females had each selected a nest basket at opposite ends of the aviary and began to construct nests. On the 17th May there was an egg in the nest of female no. 2 which was found to have been damaged, having a small puncture, apparently having been pierced by being pecked.This female laid again on the 25th May and the egg (undamaged) was replaced by an artificial one. Further eggs were laid on each of the following two days, both of which were damaged as before and they were replaced by artificial eggs. Female no.1 laid her first egg on the 26th May, going on to lay an egg on each of the following two days, each egg being damaged in the nest in the same fashion. These eggs were also replaced by artificial ones and subsequently both females settled to incubate but on the 6th June the females fought seriously and had to be separated, female no.1 now being caged. Subsequently the female in the aviary (female no. 2) went on to produce two further clutches of eggs in the same nest, each of which she incubated for a couple of weeks before finally abandoning the nest at the end of July. Meanwhile female no. 1 built a nest in the cage and laid another couple of eggs, each of which she punctured immediately after laying.



Nest and eggs.

The 2015 Season

During the winter I obtained a 2014-bred male. All three birds were caged separately during the winter. At the beginning of April female no. 2 and the male were placed in the same aviary as before, the female being released a day ahead of the male; again they were the only birds in the aviary.

First nesting: the female was first seen to carry nesting material on the 26th of April but nest-building did not commence until the end of May. The first egg was laid on the 5th June, with a second egg on the 6th, these eggs were laid in the nest but on the 7th June the male was aggressively chasing the female, causing her to hide in the artificial bamboo. A third egg had been laid on the aviary floor and the nest had been abandoned. The problem was resolved by allowing the pair access to a large adjoining aviary measuring 610x224x203cm and there was no further indication of tension between the pair. At the time this aviary was occupied by a breeding pair of Sulawesi Ground-doves *Gallicolumba tristigmata* and a male Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina.* No interaction was observed between the Rosefinches and either of these species.

Second nesting: the female promptly rebuilt the nest, laying the first egg of a clutch of four on the 16th June. These eggs were infertile and later removed, so perhaps there had still been some residual tension between the pair. The first egg of the third clutch (four eggs) was laid on the 8th July, again in the same nest. These eggs proved to be fertile and all four had hatched by 25th July, however by now the male had begun to moult and showed little interest in the nest and as a consequence only one chick survived to fledge, doing so a little prematurely on the 4th August. It was undersized, with poor feather development and as a consequence was unable to fly for some time. It survived to independence but died during the first moult in the autumn, proving to be a young male. Meanwhile female no. 1 had remained caged and on the 27th May there was an egg in the cage which again had been punctured. No nest had been built and no further eggs were laid as the female was later found dead in the bath that was hanging on the front of the cage, possibly as a consequence of being disturbed during the night.

Foster-rearing: the three abandoned eggs from the first clutch were fostered under a Canary in a friend's aviary. All three eggs hatched, one hatching 24 hours after the others, suggesting that the female Rosefinch must have commenced incubation after laying the second egg. Unfortunately the third chick failed to survive but the other two developed satisfactorily, being reared on a mixture of commercial egg-food, soaked seed and pinkies (commercially-produced frozen larvae of the Green Bottle Fly *Lucilia sericata*). Both of these young turned out to be males and were returned to me in November 2015.

The 2016 Season

During the winter one of the young males was exchanged for a 2015-bred female (designated female no. 3) and all four birds (the breeding pair and the young pair) were again caged for the winter. The older female (no. 2) died the following February from no discernible cause, so all hopes now rested with the young pair. On the 12th April the birds were released into an aviary of 366x153x193cm, lightly planted and containing a number of lightly-screened nest baskets, again positioned close to the roof. This pair proved to be compatible from the start, the male never exhibiting any aggression towards the female. They shared the aviary with a pair of Luzon Bleeding-heart Doves *Gallicolumba luzonica*.

First nesting: the female rosefinch began nest-building on the 13th May, the first of four eggs being laid on the 18th. On checking the nest on the day the fourth egg was laid I discovered that one of the eggs had been damaged and the leaking albumen had caused it and one of the other eggs to adhere to the nest lining and to each other. There was no option but to remove the remaining two eggs and to place them with a pair of canaries that I had available at the time. This was the only instance of further egg damage and it was therefore dismissed as accidental. One of the two remaining eggs was fertile and the chick was reared without difficulty, although slower to develop than subsequent parent-reared young (see below). It commenced moulting into adult plumage on the 20th July, being another male.

Second and third nesting: following the removal of the eggs of the first clutch the female built a new nest in a different basket and the first of three eggs was laid on 18th June. Two of these eggs were fertile, the young being reared by both adults without any problems. The young fledged on the 15th July, on which date the female was seen to be carrying nesting material to the site of the first nest. The first egg of a clutch of four was laid on the 22nd July. The male continued to care for the fledglings when the female commenced incubation of the third clutch, the young first showing signs of self-feeding on the 29th July, i.e. 14 days post-fledging. All four eggs of this third clutch were fertile and all had hatched successfully by the 8th August, but by this time the male had begun to moult and showed no interest in the nest and as a consequence all the young died within a couple of days.

Feeding

Seed: the basic diet offered was a good quality seed mix marketed for canaries which at times was supplemented with a seed mix designed for bullfinches although I am not sure how much of this was taken. In the spring these seeds were offered having been soaked for 24 hours as well as dry, additionally some soaked white millet seed was offered and taken.

Greenfood: chickweed *Stellaria media* and dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* seed heads and leaves were always taken eagerly as were the half-ripe seeds from the heads of seeding grasses. Some ripening rape *Brassica rapa* seed was taken but little interest was shown in fat hen *Chenopodium album*. The most favoured wild seed was that of meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*. In the autumn seeding dock *Rumex sp.* was popular, as were the berries of firethorn *Pyracantha sp.* but hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* berries were not favoured: they were possibly too large for the birds to open. Very little of the commercial seed mixes was consumed when these seeds and berries were available.

Live-food: a few mealworms and waxworms were taken when rearing young but preference was shown for pinkies which were eaten at all times of the year.

In addition to the live-food the young were fed on soaked seeds, commercial egg-food (not a lot of this was taken), pinkies and some mealworms, but primarily on seeding chickweed or, failing this, half-ripe grass seeds. The growth-rate and development of the young reared by the parents was much faster than that of the young fostered with canaries. The latter took longer to fledge (c. 18 days as opposed to c. 14 days when parent-reared) and were less developed at fledging although they caught up with the parent-reared young later on.

As is the case with other cardueline species with red in the plumage, artificial colour-feeding during the moult is necessary to retain colour in the male. This was supplied in the form of Carored dissolved in the drinking water, although the colour produced was never as intense as that of the species in the wild.

Discussion

All of the birds referred to here were captive-bred, which probably explains their readiness to attempt to nest in the aviaries as all were reasonably tame and steady. The noise produced by the wings when in flight referred to in the introduction was immediately obvious once the birds were released into an aviary.

Nest positioning: with only one exception all of the nests (nine in total) were constructed in open wicker baskets that were situated at the front of the aviaries, just below the roof, although there was a selection of other sites available. The one exception was when the two females shared an aviary without a male present, when the two nests were situated in sites that were diagonally opposite to each other. Consequently one nest was at the rear of the aviary but nonetheless it was constructed in a basket that was just below the aviary roof.

Breeding season: no serious nesting was ever attempted before the middle of May. According to the literature normally only one brood is reared each year (del Hoyo *et al.* 2010) but in the aviary a second nest was attempted following the successful rearing of a brood, although this failed, presumably as a consequence of the male having begun to moult, suggesting that the male plays an essential role in the successful rearing of the young. This is supported by the outcome of the nesting attempt in 2015 when, the male having started to moult, only one nestling from a brood of four survived to fledging and this was retarded in development.

Aggression: in 'A Manual of European Bird Keeping' (Meaden, 1979) Long-tailed Rosefinches are described as being 'very docile', which I found to be the case outside the breeding season but when they were in breeding condition the situation was very different. As described above, the male of the pair that nested in 2015 harassed the female aggressively until they were given access to a much larger aviary. There was serious fighting between the two nesting females that were housed together without a male, although this was a rather artificial situation. In 2015 a young blue tit gained access to the aviary where the pair was nesting and the incubating female promptly left the nest to join the male in harassing it and I suspect they might well have killed it if I had not intervened. I never attempted to house the breeding pairs with other passerines (with the exception of the thrush mentioned earlier) as I understood that others had also found them to be aggressive.

Egg puncturing: it is very difficult to account for this behaviour, even allowing for the artificial circumstances of the two females being housed together without the presence of a male. Both females had been reared the previous year and as these were their first attempts at nesting they had had no prior exposure to eggs, so this could not have been a learned behaviour. In each case there was just one small triangular hole in the eggshell, evidently made by the beak, there was no indication that there had been any attempt to eat any of the contents, nor was any attempt made to remove the damaged eggs from the nest. Artificial eggs placed in the nests were accepted and incubated but a genuine egg that was subsequently added to the clutch was immediately punctured in the same way, so the drive to damage the eggs was not lost once incubation commenced. The cessation of the egg damage following the removal of female no. 1 confirmed that only one of the birds was responsible for the behaviour. While interference with another bird's nest or eggs can be an expression of dominance, the females had been seen to visit each other's nest without eliciting any aggressive behaviour on the part of the owner, nor was there any indication that either nest had been interfered with. There had been no signs of aggression between the two prior to the sudden onset of fighting during the incubation period.

Incubation: in del Hoyo *et al.* (op. cit), it is stated that incubation is shared between the sexes. In my experience incubation is carried out by the female alone, in fact I cannot think of any cardueline species where incubation is shared between the sexes. On rare occasions a male cardueline finch may stand over the nest while the female is feeding, possibly giving the false impression of incubating, but more usually the male will accompany the female while she is away from the nest.

Eggs: the Wikipedia entry for the Long-tailed Rosefinch (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long-tailed_rosefinch) includes a photograph of an egg, supposedly of this species. This egg is fawn-coloured, with brown markings scattered over the shell, whereas the egg of the long-tailed rosefinch, as with other rosefinch species, is blue with some black markings that are confined to the blunt end.

Summary of breeding results

	1st egg laid	No. of eggs	No. fertile	No. of chicks reared
2015	5th June	3	3	2*
	16th June	4	0	0
	8th July	4	4	1
2016	18th May	4	?**	1*
	18th June	3	2	2
	22nd July	4	4	0

* foster-reared by canaries

** two newly-laid eggs damaged in nest, only one of the remaining two fertile.

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Products mentioned in the text:

'Pinkies'. Frozen fly larvae, marketed by Top Insect (www.topinsect.be), Belgium.

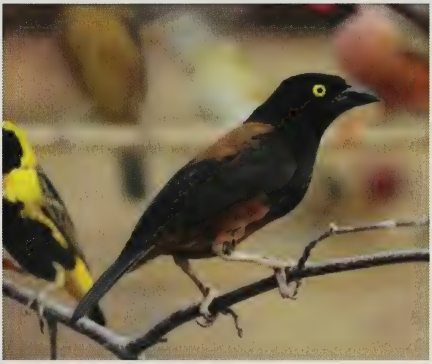
Carored (1.8% canthaxantine). Manufactured by CéDé (www.cedebirdfood.com), Belgium.

BREEDING OF CHESTNUT-AND-BLACK WEAVER
Ploceus castaneofuscus

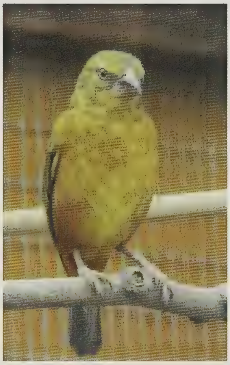
by Lisa Clingan

This Least Concern species has an extremely large range, in West Africa - Ed.

I got my Chestnut-and-black Weavers (CW) *Ploceus castaneofuscus* in February 2016 from softbill keeper Jay Fleming. They were a gift to me from a former partner, Andy Priestley. On the 5th of May 2017 I moved them and my Taveta Weavers *P. castaneiceps* to a new aviary; just one pair of each species. The reason: to separate the larger weavers from my smaller species (Napoleon *Euplectes afer* and Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*), which could be aggressive and cause problems together. I also moved my Black-headed Weavers *P. melanocephalus* to a separate aviary, on their own.



Male.



Female.

After just five minutes in the aviary, a major shock - the female while sitting on a branch started making a bobbing action: with that she laid a bright blue egg! All these weavers, and never a single egg laid until I had disturbed them! I proceeded to go back into the main aviary and check the nest they had built and adapted onto a Quelea nest. I put my finger in and – yes - a single egg in there! Again my heart dropped: I felt so guilty moving them! I decided to move the nest complete with egg, so with secateurs and cable ties I moved it to the new aviary straight away.

Over the next few days they looked in the nest but deserted it, and I noticed the second egg on the floor. Then just over four weeks later on Sunday 4th of June I sat watching the birds - they looked so miserable; no weaving in sight. "Right", I thought, "I need to move these birds!" My Dutch breeder friend said "no, give them time", but my birds looked so sad. Net in hand I moved them and the Tavetas back to the main aviary which still contained the smaller weavers: instantly they were investigating everywhere. The aviary is 5x4m with a small shelter attached. The roof is covered with corrugated plastic and plastic panels are fitted to the sides in winter. The only furnishings are branches, as the weavers quickly destroy any growing plants.

I proceeded to provide cut grass every other day, a constant supply, quite soft and roughly 20cms long. Again the male started to adapt a Quelea nest. By the end of the week a CW nest had been built! At this point I was feeding buffalo worms *Alphitobius diaperinus*, defrosted pinkies *Phaenicia sericata* and a wet mixture of egg food and soaked duck pellets - all high in protein for the birds to get used to for feeding young. This is as well as their usual foreign finch seed and lettuce twice a week.

The female was busy in and out of the nest. Then one evening I was sat watching them and their behaviour had changed, they were chasing back and forth, then the female landed on a perch, tail-up making a chirping noise, the male flew up and mated with her - all in less than a week! Over the next few days the female continued going in and out of the nest, then on the 14th of June I felt in the nest…an egg! By Friday 16th June (two days later) a second egg!

Two weeks of being extremely nervous proceeded, not allowing anyone to hang around in my back garden; ushering mother and teenage kids in and out as quickly as possible! As soon as someone entered the garden she came straight off the nest.

In the evening, exactly two weeks after the first egg was discovered (28th June), mum and I were sitting in my kitchen watching the birds when we noticed a change of behaviour. The male had destroyed all nearby Weaver nests, not a single strand anywhere. The female was making a loud chirping sound and kept going back and forth to the nest, but not going right into the nest, as if feeding. It was getting late in the day so I didn't want to disturb them.

The male was guarding the area and very territorial. I proceeded to interfere and check the nest – I couldn't resist; I just had to know what was going on in that amazing woven nest. The entrance to the nest was pointing down to the ground which made me nervous that anything would fall out.

"Right, in I go! Need to make this as quick as possible." Not an easy angle, fingers blindly going in….yes two bald little chicks. "Right, I need to get out this aviary and let the female get on with feeding." I was shaking with excitement! I got straight on my phone and messaged my three most important birdy friends. John in Yorkshire, Andrew who runs the Weaver Facebook group I belong to, and my Dutch breeder friend in Holland.

Then on day five, disaster struck – a dead chick on the aviary floor! A huge disappointment but there was still a live chick in the nest. Its sibling had probably died in the nest and female removed it. Again I felt so nervous, with just one chick left.

Over the next few weeks I kept up a constant supply of live food, pinkies, wet food and seed. I have the best feed supplier, who never failed to get me exactly what my birds needed, despite mealworm supply problems: thanks Des.

The female did all the feeding of the chick, the male took a bit of a step down, still guarding the nest but not quite so territorial.

Day nine (7th July) and I feel I need to check the nest, so in I go with phone camera at the ready. Despite the tricky nest I managed to get a photo of the underside of the chick's beak; a bit blurred but proof it's still alive.

Day 14 (19th June) the female's behaviour had changed again; she was making a loud, short, sharp, chirping sound, kept going to the nest and flying off again. This was still about four days too early for fledging. Being concerned, I went in to check on the chick. Phone camera in hand, I poked it into the entrance of the nest; with that it flew out at me and landed on a feeding ledge. I caught it by hand; it was very strong and in full feather, in excellent condition. I put it back in the nest and it stayed in there. Day 15 (20th June) I get home from work and look who's out on the twigs! Yes, the chick had officially fledged. It was looking strong and very healthy, its mother being very protective.

Day 21 (19th June) I went into the aviary to feed as normal, but I couldn't see the chick. I went into the indoor shed area: there it was sitting looking at me. I had a quick thought that this would be a good time to ring it, while I can catch it. I dived out of the aviary to get a ring, hoping and praying it'd still be in the shed when I got back. I opened the shed door and it flew into the safety area. Perfect! Easy to catch in there: no twigs, perches or other birds in the way. I had no net so had to catch it in my hands; In the meantime the female was not happy, making short, sharp, chirping sounds. I quickly got the split ring on and put the fledgling back into the aviary feeling very happy that I had managed to ring it hassle-free.

The chick got stronger day by day, not being bothered by the other birds at all and the female kept busy feeding it.

Day 28 (26th June) I went in to feed and a new CW nest was fully constructed. The following evening I sat watching the birds and - hey ho - mating in front of me! To be continued...hopefully round two.

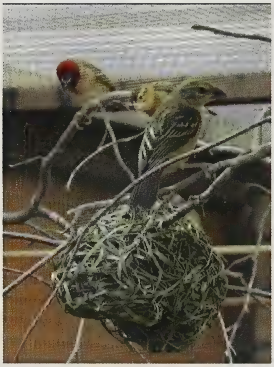
Looking ahead to next season it's going to be a whole different story. I'm going over to Holland in September to visit my breeder friend who has helped and advised me throughout this. I will be collecting two more pairs of CW from him, so I need to separate the birds: the small weavers need moving to a different aviary to give them every chance of breeding. Whydahs & Indigobirds *Vidua spp*. and Waxbills (*Estrildidae*) will also be moved away from them.

My main aviary will be dedicated to the CW as a small breeding colony.

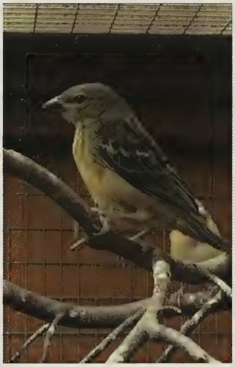
I hope you've enjoyed reading the adventure of my breeding experience. I'm no expert, but through total commitment to getting the birds synchronised and giving them everything they need I have succeeded. The chick is now feeding and has started picking up grass. Through close observation of these amazing birds I have learnt such a lot about them…bring on 2018!

As described above, the Chestnut-and-black Weaver *Ploceus castaneofuscus* has been bred by Lisa Clingan. This is believed to be the first successful breeding of this species in the British Isles. Anyone who knows of a previous breeding is asked to inform the Secretary.

"After the first round I had two more hatch but one died a week before fledging. I still have a healthy youngster from the second round. I believe the first chick is female and the second is male. Both chicks were parent reared: the female did all the rearing while the male continued to be territorial around them. I have kept the second successful nest to be mounted in a clear case, because of its amazing structure."



1st Juvenile and Nest.



2nd Fledgling.

Lisa Clingan is a new member who has a special interest in weavers and whydahs.

BREEDING MOUSSIER'S REDSTART *Phoenicurus moussieri*

by Gary Bralsford

At the beginning of 2017 I managed to pick up a beautiful pair of Moussier's Redstarts *Phoenicurus moussieri* from a keeper in the Midlands. He had overwintered them in a large flight cage and they were immaculate. He had managed to get them on a soft-food diet with only a few mini mealworms. They were a steady pair and a credit to the previous owner. This pair originated from Holland and was bred by a dedicated breeder of small soft-bills, specialising in chats, redstarts and robins (*Muscicapidae*). The pair has 2015 stamped into their rings. Having picked them up in February this year it was too early to try and breed from them and I planned to purpose-build a flight in my new bird-room extension.

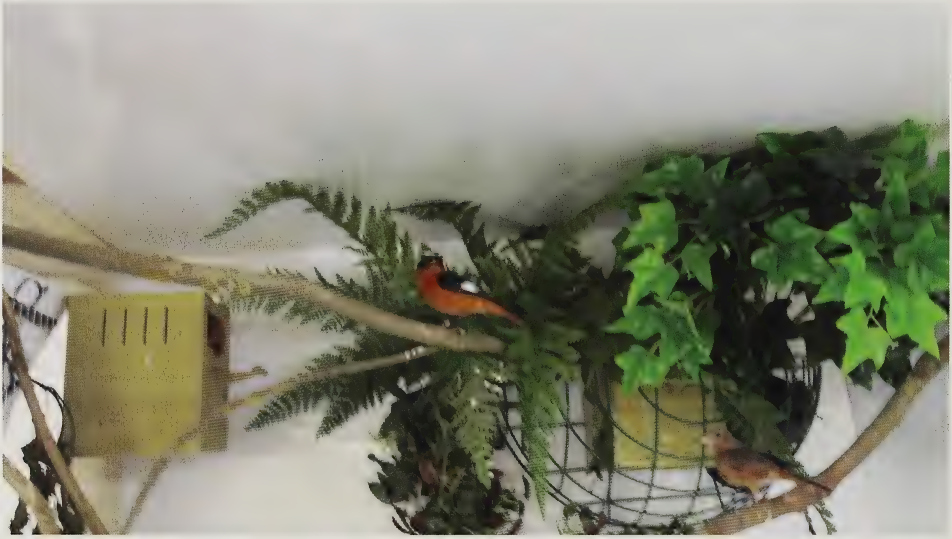
The Redstarts are 12cm in size and the sexes differ. This species is the only redstart in which both sexes can be kept together with no aggression, unlike the Common *P. phoenicurus*, that can kill their partners in an instant. This happened several times with my Daurian Redstarts *P. auroreus*: separating is a must out of the breeding season, with cautious re-introduction. Wait until the female is carrying nesting material and the male is displaying before introducing, and then I'd recommend watching carefully for a few hours.

The behaviour and shape of this species is like a stonechat *Saxicola spp.*, with its short tail quivered, like all redstarts. It perches out in the open on bushes and small trees. The male has bright rusty-orange underparts, rump and tail. Most of the upperparts are blackish, with a conspicuous white wing flash and long white band from the forehead, over the eyes and around the rear ear-coverts. Females are plump and short-tailed, noticeably shorter in flight; brown above and orange-buff below, with tail as the male. The calls include a "psew" also an "iiip iiip" sound, sometimes followed by a rasping note, a bit like Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*. The song is a short scratchy warble, rather like a Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, but not as musical.

This species is endemic to NW Africa; it is resident in Morocco E to N Tunisia and is a possible winter visitor to NW Libya. Wild habitats are dry bushy, stony or grassy hillsides and plateaux up to ~3000m, also in dry coastal woodland and scrub. In winter it reaches deserts at lower altitudes of its range. In the wild it will nest on the ground but occasionally in a hole in a tree or low in a dense bush.

Around the end of April I had finished my bird-room extension and decided to put my Moussier's Redstarts in one of the flights. The size is 7x4x6.5ft. The walls are lined with white plastic sheeting to reflect light and make cleaning easier. I decided to put plastic ivy and ferns at different heights; this would give a refuge to either sex if any chasing occurred. The floor was covered in straw and wood chips. I sited three nest boxes at different heights: one was placed in the ferns and ivy and the other two out in the open. I placed the pair in the flight and watched them for a while. They settled very quickly and were singing and displaying at one another straight away. No aggression was witnessed at all, but if the female was getting a little tired of the male bird's attention she would hide in the ivy/ferns for a while.

I sited a small, wooden, finch nest box right in the open on the wire; their excitement at this astonished me! Within minutes the pair was looking inside the box. I have never witnessed this behaviour so quickly in any other birds in 34 years of breeding them! I placed some animal hair, cotton wool plus some chopped coconut fibre in the flight. To my amazement, within minutes of the material hitting the floor both birds were carrying it to the wooden nest box. A complete nest was completed in three days, and a beauty it was.



Moussier's Redstart pair with nest on the left.

14 days later the first of a clutch of three eggs was laid. The eggs' colour was typical of a redstart: a pale blue all over. The pair sat for 14 days approximately until the first egg hatched. The parents were fantastic feeders and kept the chicks sated with size three brown crickets, mini waxworms, mini mealworms, buffalo worms and recently ecdysed regular mealworms. I also fed (small) locust hoppers, and these were the first live food that went to the chicks. All live feeds were dusted with Nutrobal: this was a precaution against developmental problems.

The adult diet was like the rearing diet, with the addition of two pâtées, mixed; I also crush dried mealworms on every feed to bulk the soft-food. Finely chopped apple and pear is offered, but not always taken, as are small seasonal fruit like elderberries and crushed rowan pomes.

My pair has gone on to rear four chicks from a total of three rounds. They had a fourth clutch, but the chicks from the final round broke them by getting into the box to roost. I have now (September 2017) removed all the nest boxes and nesting material and let them go into a moult. I will be on the lookout for another pair of Moussier's Redstarts to try to make up new unrelated pairs. A wonderful species to keep, but at the moment I think my birds could be the only ones in the UK. If anyone knows of more please contact me.

As described above, the Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri* has been bred by Gary Bralsford. This is believed to be the first successful breeding of this species in the British Isles. Anyone who knows of a previous breeding is asked to inform the Secretary.

Moussier's Redstart chick that died at hatch.

Moussier's Redstart fledgling.

Gary has since obtained an unrelated pair in November, and now has four pairs.

Gary Bralsford is a specialist softbill breeder and frequent contributor to the magazine.

CORRECTION TO AVIAN ARRIVALS AT WUPPERTAL ZOO IN 2016

In the last issue, problems with electronic file compatibility caused numbers to be added to the list of arrivals. The corrected list was sent out with the e-newsletter, and here it is in print:

Arrivals

0.1	King penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus* from Basle Zoo, Switzerland.
1	Bay-headed tanager *Tangara gyrola* from Basle Zoo, Switzerland.
0.1	White bellied caique *Pionites leucogaster* from Chemitz Zoo, Germany.
3.2	Sun conure *Aratinga solstitialis* from Straubing Zoo, Germany.
2.3	Sun conure *A. solstitialis* from Zürich Zoo, Switzerland.
3.0	Emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae* from Duisburg Zoo.
3.0	Gentoo penguin *Pygoscelis papua* from Odense Zoo, Denmark.
1.0	Spangled cotinga *Cotinga cotinga*, in exchange for our egg-laying female pompadour cotinga *Xipholena punicea*, 14yrs old from a private breeder.
0.1	Socorro dove *Zenaida graysoni* from Warsaw Zoo, Poland.
1.0	Socorro dove *Z. graysoni* from Paignton Zoo.
1.0	Spotted thicknee *Burhinus capensis* from Tier und Freizeitpark Thüle.
0.1	Great kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus* from Dortmund Zoo.
1.0	Bateleur eagle *Terahopius ecaudatus* from Schmiding, Austria.

ENDANGERED YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING SIGHTED IN SHETLANDS

The plight of the Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* has been reported in this section before and after a 90% decline is now classified as Endangered. This species winters in Asia where it is heavily hunted, especially in China. It breeds in north-east Europe and across northern Asia. It is only reported infrequently in Western Europe but on 20th September this year one was sighted on Out Skerries in the Shetlands.

* * *

WHITE SANDWICH TERN FLEDGES IN ABERDEENSHIRE

Sandwich Terns *Thalasseus sandvicensis* are the subject of a long-standing colour ringing scheme by the Grampian Ringing Group in Aberdeenshire. This year while ringing some of the chicks it was noticed that one was pure white. Despite fears that it would not survive, it eventually grew into a majestic pure white juvenile and had started its migration down the west coast, spending several weeks on Merseyside. It is likely to be at least three, possibly four summers before it returns to breed, but should be easy spot on its wanderings.

* * *

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED SUMATRAN GROUND CUCKOO RECORDED BY CAMERA TRAP

The use of camera traps to record wildlife is becoming increasingly important as demonstrated in November 2016 when views were captured of the Sumatran Ground Cuckoo *Carpococcyx viridis* in Batang Galis National Park in Northern Sumatra. This critically endangered species has been recorded on only several occasions and these sightings, in a 200 square mile reserve, are very welcome indeed.

* * *

BTO 2016 RINGING REPORT AVAILABLE

The 2016 ringing report for Britain and Ireland published by the British Trust for Ornithology is now available on their website. This report gives brief details of species ringed and a breakdown of age groups. Well over a million birds were ringed during the year by a network of trained ringers. Highlights amongst the 250+ species were 30 species of warblers, four species of shrikes and Bluethroat and Red-flanked Bluetail. A vast array of information is viewable from their main webpage.

* * *

GRIT CONSUMED AS DIGESTION AID BY BEARDED REEDLINGS

Many species of birds change their diets throughout the year to take account of the changing seasons or migration. Several warblers, most notably Blackcaps *Sylvia* *atricapilla*, begin to gorge themselves on elderberries and blackberries to put on weight to sustain themselves during their migration to warmer climes. However, species which stay put in temperate conditions need to adapt, especially those restricted to specialised habitats such as marsh-loving Bearded Reedlings *Panurus biarmicus*. During the warmer months, they feed on insects but as autumn approaches their diet changes to feeding on the seed heads of several reed species such as *Phragmities spp*. They consume quantities of fine grit as an aid to digestion for this drastic change to a much coarser diet. In reserves where they occur, and where they are monitored, platforms of fine grit are put out.

* * *

FIVE NEW BLACK-HEADED DUCK BROOD HOSTS RECORDED

The Black-headed Duck *Heteronetta atricapilla* is the only recorded interspecific brood parasite within the order Anseriformes. Recent research in Argentina, both through wild observations and museum collections, has increased the number of host species recorded in the wild by five. As the young are virtually independent on hatching a surprising list of hosts have been recorded: Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax,* Long-winged Harrier *Circus buffoni*, Maguari Stork *Ciconia maguari*, White-cheeked Pintail *Anas bahamensis* and Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus himantopus mexicanus* are all new taxa recorded while Southern Screamer *Chauna torquata*, Great Grebe *Podiceps major,* Bare-faced Ibis *Phimosus infuscatus,* White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi*, Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja*, Fulvous Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna bicolor,* Rosy-billed Pochard *Netta peposaca*, Coscoroba Swan *Coscoroba coscoroba*, Black-necked Swan *Cygnus melancoryphus*, Chimango Caracara *Phalcoboenus chimango*, Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*, Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*, White-winged Coot *Fulica leucoptera*, Red-fronted Coot *F. rufifrons*, Red-gartered Coot *F. armillata*, Brown-hooded Gull *Larus maculipennis*, Plumbeous Rail *Pardirallus sanguinolentus* and Spotted Rail *P. maculatus* are previously known hosts.

* * *

WWT BREED & RELEASE BLACK-TAILED GODWITS

Twenty six Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* raised by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust were released on the Ouse Washes in early September. These are expected to follow the species' normal migration route to Africa for the winter. Time will tell!

* * *

NORTHERN WHEATEAR RECORDED MIMICKING 20 BIRD SPECIES

The island of Skokholm off the Welsh coast is home to around 20 breeding pairs of Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Those resident around the lighthouse have been recorded as mimicking 20 species of birds, namely Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus,* Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Redshank *T. totanus*, Swift *Apus*

apus, Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, House Martin *Delichon urbicum*, Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, Pied Wagtail *M. alba*, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* have all been imitated.

* * *

HISTORY OF LAYSAN RAIL

The September 2017 issue of The Wilson Journal of Ornithology contains an interesting article on the extinct Laysan Rail *Zapornia palmeri* tracking its history from discovery in 1891 to its ultimate extinction in 1944. The author Julian P. Hume examined museum skins and literature to document previously undescribed juvenile plumage and to research its steady decline to extinction. The usual suspects are to blame, but there are several avicultural snippets of interest. It was discovered by collectors working for Walter Rothschild on Laysan Island and apart from collecting specimens, at least one pair made it back to the UK alive; no mention is made of how long they survived, but they are expected to now be in the Natural History Museum, Tring's skin collection. Birds were relocated between islands in the hope of saving the species and a number had been caught ready for translocation, but permission was refused at the last minute. As the author states, it was bureaucracy that deprived the species of a last chance of survival. Rather depressingly, his final paragraph asks if management bodies are taking heed of the disastrous circumstances that overtook the Laysan Rail, and concluding evidence so far does not look good.

* * *

NIGHT PARROT DETECTED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Australian Wildlife Conservancy has confirmed the presence of Night Parrot *Pezoporus occidentalis* in South Australia for the first time in more than a century. John Young, who has been involved in the rediscovery of the species in several spots in Queensland, found a feather of the parrot in a Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia castanotis* nest located in samphire at Kalamurina Wildlife Sanctuary, on the north shore of Kata Thandi-Lake Eyre. The identification of the feather has been confirmed independently by other researchers. They found the first clue of the presence of the species thanks to the use of camera traps in 2016 in a remote location accessible only by helicopter. The populations discovered in Queensland and Western Australia are living in spinifex, while the present spot in Kalamurina is in an area of samphire, with no spinifex habitat. This is dramatically changing the present knowledge about the ecology of this secretive species.

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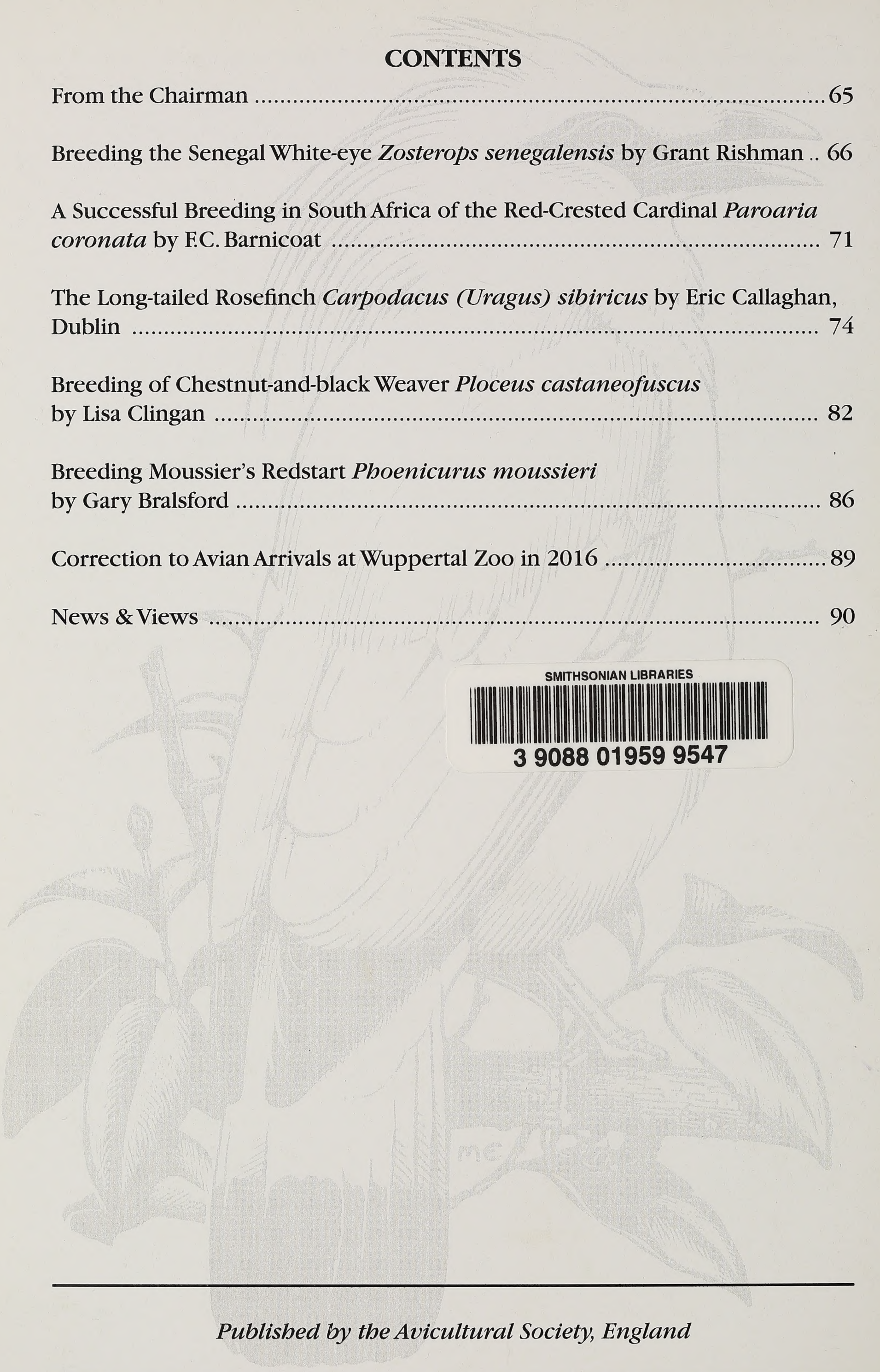

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